

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 040822

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR, SOPN, CSCE, CZ

SUBJECT:RETALIATION FOR JOURNALISTS' TREATMENT

- -

REFS: (A) PRAGUE 411, (B) PRAGUE 447

1. WE HAVE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED YOUR PROPOSALS REGARDING
RECIPROCAL ACTION FOR RECENT CZECHOSLOVAK TREATMENT OF US
JOURNALISTS. WE AGREE THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO EMPHA-
SIZE TO GOC THAT HARASSMENT AND VISA DENIALS ARE UNAC-
CEPTABLE. WE ARE, HOWEVER, SENSITIVE TO THE UPCOMING
BELGRADE MEETING AND CONCERNED WITH MAINTAINING OUR GOOD
RECORD ON JOURNALISTS AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION.

2. REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF EXPELLING A CZECHOSLOVAK
JOURNALIST, WE ARE NOT IN FAVOR OF SUCH A STEP. IT IS NOT
IN KEEPING WITH OUR BASIC COMMITMENTS TO FREEDOM OF THE
PRESS, WOULD NOT BE STRICTLY RECIPROCAL, AND COULD AFFECT
THE BILATERAL ATMOSPHERE TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THE GOC
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MIGHT, INTER ALIA, HOLD OFF ON RESOLVING DIVIDED
FAMILIES CASES.

3. WE WOULD ALSO PREFER NOT TO DENY A VISA TO A
CZECHOSLOVAK JOURNALIST APPLICANT. SUCH A DENIAL COULD
PUT US ON THE DEFENSIVE AT BELGRADE AND WOULD BE IN-

CONSISTENT WITH FREEDOM OF INFORMATION. MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT WOULD GIVE THE GOC AN EXCUSE FOR FURTHER VISA REFUSALS TO US JOURNALISTS, WHOM THEY WOULD NO DOUBT PREFER TO EXCLUDE FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA AT THIS TIME. IF THE GOC BROADENS ITS POLICY OF REFUSING VISAS TO US JOURNALISTS BEYOND LA TIMES REPORTER SEEGER, WE MAY WISH TO RECONSIDER THIS OPTION.

4. WE THEREFORE PREFER YOUR SUGGESTION THAT WE FURTHER POSTPONE THE SPACIL VISIT. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT RPT NOT WANT TO GIVE PUBLICITY TO THIS MOVE. AT THIS TIME THE EMBASSY SHOULD NOT TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN INFORMING SPACIL, BUT SHOULD WAIT FOR THE CZECHOSLOVAKS TO ASK ABOUT THE VISIT (WE REALIZE THAT THEY MAY NOT FOR THE TIME BEING). AT SUCH TIME, THE GOC SHOULD BE INFORMED THAT THE SPACIL VISIT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THIS APPROACH LEAVES US WITH THE FLEXIBILITY TO DEAL WITH THE SPACIL VISIT AS WE SEE FIT DEPENDING ON EXISTING BILATERAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

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